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AUTHOR Penfield, Elizabeth F.
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ABSTRACT

Based on the Bay Area Writing Project, The Jefferson Parish (Louisiana) Writing Project (JPWP) was developed, focusing on improving writing instruction and writing itself. Each year, one public high school becomes a demonstration center for intensive staff development, school-wide writing assessment, and workshops for teachers at neighboring public and private schools. The project is based on the belief that teachers are the most important resource for staff development. The first year, the project's resource director conducted a preservice workshop, presented demonstrations of various teaching techniques, developed a writing resource library for students and teachers, devised a strategy for the teaching of writing, which resulted in the "JPWP Resource Guide," and organized a writing assessment session in which teachers scored preproject and postproject writing samples. At the end of the first year, the teachers participating in the project were asked to grade unidentified essays written by students from the demonstration school and a control school. The scores indicated that the student writing from the demonstration school had improved more than the writing from the control school. The teachers' confidence in writing assessment also improved. The first year of JPWP was a success despite the setbacks of a teacher strike, and frequent adversarial relationships between classroom teachers and the resource director. (HTH)

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FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND THE TEACHING OF WRITING: A LOCAL ADAPTATION OF THE BAWP MODEL

Elizabeth F. Penfield

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Faculty Development and the Teaching of Writing:
A Local Adaptation of the BAWP Model

As the state that for some years has ranked 50th in the nation in literacy, Louisiana will try almost anything that looks as though it may improve students' skills. The Bay Area Writing Project had particular appeal, focussing as it does on improving the teaching of writing and on writing itself. So for three years now, Louisiana has had a writing project. Located in New Orleans, staffed and supported by the University of New Orleans, and funded by University California/ Berkeley, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Frost Foundation, Southern Bell, Shell Oil, the Dalton Book Store, and private donors, the Greater New Orleans Writing Project has had a considerable impact on both teachers who have attended the summer institute and their schools but a far lesser impact on the school system as a whole. To remedy that problem, Kathleen Orgeron, proposal writer for Jefferson Parish (county), and I worked up a school-based adaptation of the BAWP model, Jefferson applied for Title IVc funding from the state, and the Jefferson Parish Writing Project was born. What follows describes the first year of the Jefferson Parish Writing Project (JPWP), its problems and its successes, in hopes that other schools or districts may find bits and pieces that help meet their needs.

First, some information about the area is in order. Jefferson Parish is a growing suburban and industrial community adjacent to New Orleans. The 1970 census shows the population to be 337,568, up 128,700 over 1960; the rate of growth has continued to the point that

Jefferson is the second most populous parish in the state. Its population is served by both public and parochial school systems. Within those systems, the greatest need appears to be at the secondary level. In 1978, for instance, CTBS scores showed 61% of the public school secondary student performing below grade level. The Jefferson Parish Writing Project is designed to reduce that figure.

To affect all of the public high schools, JPWP uses a simple structure: each year, one public high school becomes a demonstration center, providing intensive staff development, school-wide writing assessment, and workshops for teachers at neighboring schools. At the end of the third and final year of funding, all nine public high schools will have been involved in JPWP, three directly as demonstration centers, and five indirectly through workshops. In addition, six non-public high schools will have been involved in pre-service and in-service workshops. So much for logistics.

At the heart of JPWP lies the BAWP-tested belief that teachers themselves are the most valuable resources for staff development. And JPWP uses this belief to improve student writing, the teaching of writing, and the assessing of writing. The key figure in JPWP is the resource teacher, a former writing project fellow turned teacher-consultant, who acts as ring-master, cheerleader, sheepdog, and general factotum. Jo Hollier is the project's resource teacher and this year Alfred E. Bonnabel High School was the demonstration center. There Jo started the year with a five-day preservice workshop open to 33 teachers, 31 on the Bonnabel English faculty and two who taught at non-public schools. Once school started she conducted workshops and

gave demonstrations of various teaching techniques to the Bonnabel staff, all the time building a writing resource library for students and teachers. As the year wore on, she consulted with each faculty member frequently, helping develop and field test a strategy for the teaching of writing that would be included in the JPWP Resource Guide, a collection of activities that would form a curriculum guide. Finally, Jo organized and helped administer the writing assessment in which the Bonnabel teachers scored pre-and post-writing samples. Throughout all these activities, Jo acted as a pedagogical matchmaker, discovering interests and strengths, then putting teachers in touch with other teachers, with materials, with theories. To accomplish all this, Jo had an office, a telephone, a bottomless well of energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm, and a great deal of support from the school's principal, Em Tampke, the parish's English consultant, Margaret Goodman, and a host of others. If Jo had had any time left over, she would have been writing up reports like this, a job that falls to me in my role as project consultant.

Just before the start of the school year, all of the Bonnabel English teachers and two non-public school teachers were invited to attend the pre-service workshop, a five-day mini-institute that introduced various techniques for the teaching of writing, drew out a consensus for assessing writing, and tested that consensus on sample student essays. As in the regular summer institutes modeled after BAWP, the teachers themselves wrote a great deal; none of the presentations was passive. Drawing upon teacher/consultants from the Greater New Orleans Writing Project and BAWP, the presentations varied from

BAWP's Rebekah Kaplan and her "show don't tell" writing exercises to GNOWP's Lougene Drumm and her controlled composition exercises. Along the way, pre-writing ideas, editing skills, and the basics were covered, as were particular problems common to the teaching of writing: how to motivate the reluctant writer and how to cope with the paper load. To some of the teachers much of what was talked about was old hat, but so much was covered that some of it was also new. And because the presentations required writing, writing individually, writing in groups, sharing writing, the teachers started to rediscover their own interests and, more to the point, to discover each other's. As in the case of the summer institutes, everyone was struck by how little English teachers write but how essential it is that they do.

Writing together and discussing the writing built up a relaxed, informal, open atmosphere, one that led easily into a discussion of standards, a subject that in a large group frequently leads to defensiveness and hostility. We started with a bunch of student papers that had been written that summer. Each teacher had a copy of the same paper. I asked the teachers to read it as quickly as possible and give it a score from 1 to 9, 1 being low. If the paper was not at all related to the topic, it received a 0. After the teachers had scored the paper, I tallied the scores on the chalk board, noting where the numbers grouped. If a paper received several 5's, a few 3's and a few 7's, I asked the teachers who had given the 5's to tell me their reasons. From comments such as "Well, the student uses specific words but relies entirely on forms of the verb to be," we would draw a generalization: vocabulary correct but ordinary. After reading

through and discussing a number of papers representing a range of abilities, we had a rough scoring guide, one we were willing to sleep on and test out the next day. That we did, and after a bit of tinkering we not only had a scoring guide everyone was satisfied with but one that represented a consensus on standards and could be applied reliably. To use the scoring guide, two teachers rated the same paper independently so neither one knew the score the previous reader had given. After all the papers in a batch (usually twenty or so) had been scored, the papers and score sheets went to a tallier who checked and added up the ratings. If the scores differed by more than two points, the paper went to a third reader; the final score was the sum of the two closest ratings. A low paper was in the 2 to 6 range, middle from 7 to 12, and high from 13 to 18. During the pre-service workshop, we stopped reading papers after the group of 23 teachers read the same five papers in a row, all of which were scored no more than two points apart.

The scoring system and the guide itself are modified versions of ones developed by BAWP's Ken Williams, one of the consultants for the 1979 GNOWP summer institute. The difference lies in the fact that ours was based on Jefferson Parish student papers and reflected the values of the Bonnabel staff, an important point to note if states move away from state-wide to school-based assessment. It took us two days to develop a valid, reliable instrument that could be used to show students, parents, and faculty members in other disciplines what characterized a poor, average, or superior paper. What's more, the guide could be used to evaluate any given paper or group of papers.

We would be using it later, for instance, to score pre-and post-test student essays. Rather than describe the guide in detail, I have appended a copy at the end of this report.

The success of the pre-service workshop can be measured to some extent by attendance. In spite of the fact that the workshop meant giving up the last week of vacation, 23 out of a possible 31 Bonnabel teachers attended. True, they received a stipend of $25 a day, but that hardly offset working from 8 to 3 in a Louisiana August. The teachers who had been involved in summer school had almost no vacation at all; the 1979 pre-service ran from August 13 through August 17 and school was to start on August 21.

Unfortunately a strike that lasted for 26 school days intervened, and it was October before the first class met. True, school was officially in session in the interim, but a high percentage of the teachers in the parish went out on strike. When the strike was over and classes started meeting regularly, the project faced some hard feelings. Of the 31 English teahers at Bonnabel, four crossed the picket lines, incurring a great deal of resentment. A lot was also directed at the resource teacher who was declared management by the school board and, therefore, did not even have the option to strike. Add to these obstacles the fact that the faculty at Bonnabel was really two faculties, one from an all girls school and one from an all boys school, schools that had only been merged as Bonnabel in the fall of 1977; add also the fact that Bonnabel had a negative academic image, and the obstacles become awesome.

Against this background, the resource teacher had an uphill fight. She had to work individually with each teacher, first finding out what the person wanted to do in the way of developing a strategy for the teaching of writing, and then helping the person do it. Write-ups of the strategies would eventually be put together to form the JPWP Resource Guide, a collection of teacher-generated, classroom-tested techniques for teaching writing. Along the way of developing these strategies, the resource teacher found herself digging through old issues of English Journal, giving model demonstrations, reading piles of student papers, and observing classes. Out of all the chaos, however, came a well organized, sensible, and above all useful document.

Each strategy is written up in the same format. Each description starts with the purpose of the strategy stated as clearly as possible. For example, one exercise is designed to reduce writing apprehension, another to integrate writing into the teaching of grammatical terminology. By stating the purpose first, each write-up establishes a clear focus for the lesson, a focus often missing in what has passed for the teaching of writing. After purpose comes level, indicated by course number and descriptive tag. "English 155, remedial skills course" communicates not only to the Jefferson Parish teacher, well versed in the school system's elaborate numbering scheme, but to other teachers as well. The teacher's name is listed next on the theory that credit should be given where it is due and in order to promote further discussion. At Bonnabel, for instance, teachers would say, "Hey, I tried your plan for getting students to use supporting details, but I had to modify it a bit." What then followed was a useful discussion of the

modification which in turn might be written up for the Guide. And because all of the write-ups use the same format, modifications are easy to spot.

The format continues, leaving space for a phrase to describe the final product, whether it be a paragraph presenting events in chronological order or a fully developed essay on Huckleberry Finn. The strategy described may be just the first step, so the final one is important to keep in mind. So of course is time, the amount of class time the strategy will use. The other items in the format take up the bulk of the description: suggested procedures, examples, additional activities (what to do if you have 10 minutes left, as well as suggestions that build on the activity), assessment of the writing, comments, and additional resources. The strategies vary in time from one to two class periods, in level from a remedial skills course to one in American Literature for the college bound; some of the strategies call for group writing, others for individually written paragraphs and papers; some focus on editing, others on pre-writing and writing. All, however, are detailed descriptions of writing activities complete with a theoretical base and suggested bibliography. The bibliography serves two purposes: it acquaints teachers with the theory behind the practical application, thereby showing how the lesson can be adapted to meet different needs, and it gives teachers a range of resources. Lacking the knowledge of how a particular technique can work, teachers frequently dismiss good ideas with "Well, it just won't work for me" or "My low-level students could never do that."

The whole idea, again BAWP-based, of getting information about the teaching of writing into the hands of teachers underpins JPWP. Jo Hollier, the resource teacher, compiled an annotated bibliography of books on writing already in the Bonnabel library to make them more readily available. In addition, she developed the library's resources, bringing it up to date with such NCTE publications as Research on Composing, A Laboratory Approach to Writing, and Evaluating Writing as well as such stand-bys as Peter Elbow's Writing without Teachers and Ken Macrorie's books. To encourage their use, she also worked up annotated bibliographies on specialized subjects such as teaching writing to beginners, using peer and self-evaluation of writing, and writing about literature through values clarification. In addition, Jo distributed descriptions of new books along with some excerpts that would make them tempting, Irmscher's "Book of Lists" from his Teaching Expository Writing, for instance, or Laque's editing checklist from her Laboratory Approach to Writing. Films added to the collection of resources, and prior to the arrival of a film, Jo would write it up, describing it and giving some examples of how it could be used to teach writing. Slides, tapes, film strips, all became part of Bonnabel's growing library on writing.

During the school year, much of this information was made available to teachers from other schools who came to Bonnabel for two one-day workshops, workshops that involved some of the Bonnabel faculty in presentations and familiarized everyone with the scoring guide the Bonnabel faculty had developed, for assessment is another keystone of JPWP. During the preservice week, the Bonnabel faculty had reached a

consensus on standards and their application; late in the second semester, the faculty gathered to apply their scoring guide to pre- and post-test student essays from Bonnabel and the control site. In the fall, all the students at Bonnabel and at a control high school, East Jefferson, were asked to write an essay, half the students writing on one topic, half on another. That spring, the process was repeated but with the topics reversed so that a student who wrote on topic A in the fall wrote on topic B in the spring. All the papers were identified by student number only. Thus the readers could not tell when the essay was written nor by whom nor at what school. The 31 Bonnabel English teachers read approximately 2,000 student papers, selected at random out of the combined total of 8,050 essays, 4,443 pre- and post-samples from Bonnabel and 3,607 from East Jefferson. though both groups of students started the year with similar scores, the Bonnabel students' writing improved more than the East Jefferson students'. What's more, the improvement showed up statistically significant at the .05 level. The Bonnabel teachers' confidence in assessing writing also improved, showing a .001 level of significance as compared to the East Jefferson teachers'.

All in all, the first year of JPWP was a success. Along the way, however, it had its problems. In addition to the hefty but impossible to measure impact of the teachers' strike, the concept of a resource teacher had some kinks. What does the resource teacher do about teachers who refuse to cooperate? Using the school administration as friendly persuaders created an adversarial relationship between the classroom teacher and resource teacher, so now we know to let the

situation alone and hope peer pressure will change the attitude of the classroom teacher. The same answer holds true for those teachers whose resentment is less open or is based upon the philosophy of "my classroom, my kingdom." These attitudes began to change as teachers saw that the resource teacher was just that -- not an invader, dictator, or administrational spy. Then, too, a faculty the size of Bonnabel's is bound to have a teacher or two who is just plain poor, who floats along doing little. We found that what usually happens happened: the rest of the faculty compensated by putting in a little extra work here, a little extra work there. The greatest problem, however, had nothing to do with attitude or competence but with circumstances. Quite simply, the enemy was time: time for conferences, time for classroom visits, time for reading, time for discussion.

Even so, we now have the JPWP Resource Guide, the compilation of writing strategies, and perhaps more important the Bonnabel faculty wanted to continue the project at Bonnabel for the next year. The resource teacher and the project, however, will move on to another high school that will be the second year's demonstration site, but JPWP will leave behind a wealth of materials and a lot of enthusiasm. Whereas before the project, no one at Bonnabel showed any interest in the GNOWP Summer Institute, this spring five teachers initiated applications and one is now attending, a number that would have been higher had not several teachers' summer plans changed at the last minute. The JPWP has lived up to the assumptions stated in the grant application, showing that "writing can be taught as both a means of communication and as a tool for learning, [that] what teachers should know

about the teaching of writing can best be identified by starting with examples of classroom practice, and [that] curriculum change can be accomplished by a program of staff development in which teachers are the teachers of teachers." The Jefferson Parish Writing Project started the year with one resource teacher at Bonnabel. It now has 31.

Elizabeth F. Penfield
University of New Orleans

JPWP Scoring Guide

General Characteristics

Low (1-3)	Middle (4-6)	High (7-9)
Inadequate response to topic: little development of topic; little or no sense of voice, audience, tone; quality of ideas poor, unimaginative.	Generally competent response to topic: moderately sustained and developed ideas; some sense of voice, audience, tone; quality of ideas good; some sense of imagination.	Superior response to topic: fully sustained and developed ideas; strong sense of voice, audience, tone; quality of ideas superior; imaginative, perceptive.
Little if any, sense of paragraph: controlling idea absent or unclear; illogical arrangement of details; transitions absent or inappropriate; beginning, middle, and weak or missing.	Paragraph structure apparent, but: controlling idea not fully supported; lapses in logical organization; transitions present; beginning, middle, end identifiable.	Controlling idea fully supported: details arranged logically and effectively; transitions subtle and effective; beginning, middle, and end presented through effective paragraphing.
Little control over sentence: incomplete, run-together, or awkward sentences; little (if any) variety in sentence length; little (if any) variety in sentence pattern.	Control over sentence evidenced: few incomplete, run-on, or awkward sentences; some variation in sentence length; some variety in sentence pattern.	Fluent sentences: few (if any) structural weaknesses; syntactically mature sentences demonstrating variation in length and pattern.
Difficulty with edited American English: problems in verb agreement and tense; problems with case and number; basic errors in punctuation, capitalization; illiterate spelling; limited vocabulary.	Moderate control over edited American English: few if any problems with verb agreement and tense; few problems with case and number; few problems with period, comma, apostrophe, punctuation, capitalization; common words spelled correctly; vocabulary appropriate, but ordinary.	Reasonable mastery of edited American English: consistent verb agreement and tense; correct case and number; varied and effective use of punctuation; correct spelling; vocabulary specific,